

some way, in the waning days of this Congress to work this out. We are going to work very hard. We will do it with the support and consideration of the majority leader, or without it. We really believe this is necessary. We are sorry the majority leader has objected, but we understand the reasons.

Mr. LOTT. Let me say, Mr. President, I am sure we have not heard the last of this issue. As we get to the conclusion of the session, there will be other areas or bills where this issue will be presented and argued. I fully expect that to happen.

Mr. President, is there objection?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There was objection.

Mr. LOTT. We are back to the original objection to the motion and the reading be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

NATIONAL ENERGY SECURITY ACT OF 2000—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 552, S. 2557, regarding the increasing price of gasoline and decreasing America's dependency on foreign oil.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is debatable.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period for the transaction of routine morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONFERENCE ACTION

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, Senator DORGAN had indicated he had some questions he would like to ask. I have some tributes and routine business and also the closing script that we would like to go into. I thought maybe I would yield for some questions before we begin that.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I appreciate the Senator from Mississippi yielding to me. I wanted to propound a series of questions.

First of all, let me say that I respect the difficult job the majority leader has. As we come to the end of the 106th Congress and try to put all the pieces together and make them fit, and so on, it is a difficult job.

One specific piece of legislation that is very important to me—as are many others—is the Agriculture appropriations bill.

I come from a farm State. This is a critically important piece of legislation.

The House of Representatives passed an Agriculture appropriations bill on July 11. The Senate passed one on July 20. It is now September 22. I was appointed a conferee for this appropriations conference. I am on the subcommittee, and there has been no appropriations conference at all. We are toward the end of this legislative session, and I worry about the regular process.

Will we have an appropriations conference?

The reason I am asking this question is, as the majority leader knows, there are some very controversial things in this legislation. I understand there are, because the Senate by a majority vote said we want them. One of those controversial issues is a policy that says: Let us stop using food as a weapon. We want to abolish sanctions on food shipments all around the world. It is controversial.

Some don't want to do that. Some want to continue to use food sanctions against Cuba and other countries. I don't. Seventy Members of the Senate voted not to do it. We want to abolish that approach. That is one.

The other controversial issue is—Senator JEFFORDS and I offered the amendment on the reimportation of prescription drugs approved by the FDA. That was controversial.

The reason I am asking the question of the majority leader is, yesterday someone from the news media called me and said another Member of the Senate indicated that next week the Agriculture appropriations bill will be coming to the floor of the Senate. This Senator asked: How will that happen? He said: By magic.

By magic? I am a conferee. If there is a conference report on the Agriculture appropriations bill being brought to the floor of the Senate, it is not coming from a conference I was ever invited to attend.

These are very important issues.

I haven't mentioned the issue of crop loss and quality loss on crops in North Dakota and across the country where farmers have been devastated by disease and quality loss in their crops. We want to focus on that in this bill as well.

I will not give a speech. But I want to ask the majority leader: Can he tell me anything about this conference or anything about this "magic" that one Member of the Senate suggested was going to happen? Do we expect to have a conference with the House on Agriculture appropriations? And will those of us who are conferees and who come from farm States and have an abiding interest in doing the right thing have the opportunity to pursue these policies and get votes on them?

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I would be glad to try to respond to some of the questions and comments.

First of all, I certainly understand the Senator's interest in this very important funding bill for agriculture in America. There is a lot of funding here. I don't know the total amount of this bill, but it is multibillion dollars, and it is important for our farm economy, for food for our people in this country, and also for exports in many ways.

My State also is heavily involved in agriculture and has to deal with a number of problems, all the way from droughts to floods—everything but locusts.

Then, of course, we have the timber industry, which is an important part of our agricultural economy. Now that is in very difficult straits, caused to a large degree because of subsidized timber products and lumber from other countries—Canada, Russia, and every place else. It is just killing our domestic timber industry. When you add to that the administration's very bad national forest policy and timber policies, they are having a hard time. So I agree, it is important, and I share the Senator's interest in it.

Maybe he is asking the wrong Mississippiian about this bill. I certainly have an interest, and as majority leader I continue to try to urge the various Senate committees of appropriations and conferees to get together and complete their work. But the Senator from Mississippi, Mr. COCHRAN, is the chairman of the Senate agriculture appropriations subcommittee. He is directly and intimately involved.

I think there are two or three reasons that conference has not yet met. First of all, the main reason is the House hasn't appointed conferees. They have to appoint conferees. One of the reasons they haven't done that, as the Senator from North Dakota knows, as a former House Member knows, and I do, after they do that, they are then subject to motions in the House that could be a further complicating factor in getting the work done. I think they are waiting to appoint conferees when they are ready to complete action in conference. That is one thing.

The second thing is there still has been, up until yesterday, I think, some question about exactly how much money was going to be needed in the disaster area because, as the Senator knows, there continue to be problems that are related to the fires, and they are still trying to get an estimate of exactly what that amount of money would be.

Then there are some issues that are not going to be easy to resolve, but they are going to have to be resolved—reimportation of drugs, as the Senator mentioned. The Senate acted on that. We had the Jeffords-Dorgan amendment as amended by Senator COCHRAN, then the House language by Congressman COBURN, I believe.

You have to find some way to get a result. I am satisfied that there is